



GROUP COMMON BOARD MEETING

**ONGO PARTNERSHIP LTD (Company Registration Number: 08048224)
and ONGO HOMES LTD (FCA Mutuals Registration No 7639) (the Association)**

**Held at 2.30pm on Wednesday 18 May 2022
Board Room, Ongo House, High Street, Scunthorpe, DN15 6AT and via MS Teams**

MINUTES

Present:

Group Common Board: Bob Walder (Chair), Steve Hepworth, Melvin Kenyon (Senior Independent Director) (by Teams), Michael Finister-Smith (by Teams), John Wright (by Teams), Helen Lennon (by Teams), Rachel Cook (by Teams), Paula Gouldthorpe (by Teams), Natalie Cresswell, Liz Cook (by Teams)

Officers: Ashley Harrison (by Teams), Jo Sugden, Pete Stones, Karen Cowan, Fiona Ruddick (Minutes), Kevin Hornsby, Kassie Boothby

Apologies: Paul Warburton

Absence: None

Also Present: Dawn Johnson (Customer) and Becky Johns (Staff)

Time meeting opened: 2.31pm

Quorum: It was reported that proper notice of the Meeting had been given in accordance with the rules of Ongo Homes and the Articles of Association of Ongo Partnership. A quorum being present, the Chair declared the meeting open.

Declarations of Interest: No declarations of interest were made.

1. **Agenda item 3: Minutes of Previous Meetings & Matters Arising**

The minutes from the meetings held on 29 March 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record for the Group Common Board, Ongo Homes and Ongo Partnership and will be signed by the Chair.

2. **Agenda item 4: Action List**

Board were asked for comments on action 1/22 which presented proposed new strategic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). A request was made that % of rent collected be added. **Action 4/22.** The Technology Team are looking at a piece of work to review how data is presented to Board around performance and whether it can be improved.

3. **Agenda item 5: Chief Executive's Update**

Summary: This report provides an update on activity undertaken to achieve the key strategic objectives agreed in the Ongo Corporate Plan 2019-2023 and the attached Key Performance Indicators (KPI) report tracks progress against these strategic objectives.

Discussion points/questions:

- Steve Hepworth explained the Income Collection Team had worked hard when the true performance around arrears came in after year end. Ongo Homes is one of the top in the sector with arrears and are collecting more cash each month in former debts than is being raised as new former debt.
- To support tenants in the cost of living, there is affordability work staff do, ongoing work with the local credit union and the income manager looks at affordability on a case-by-case basis.
- Pressure is building on the development programme with an increase in build costs and land shortages. Ongo Developments Board are considering a report at their next meeting which will then be reported and discussed with this Board.
- Members recognised the hard work of the Income Collection Team with one Member commenting they had not seen such a low arrears level for several years within the sector.

Ongo Partnership and Ongo Homes Agreed: Board considered the report and the performance data detailing progress made towards meeting the Corporate Plan strategic priorities and debated the issues affecting the sector, highlighting any additional work or activities required.

4. **Agenda Item 6: IGA & SLA**

Summary: Following the changes made to the governance structure in 2020 some additional follow on items were identified to ensure our documentation was up to date and followed best practice. The Intra Group Agreement (IGA) between Ongo Partnership & Ongo Homes was updated in January 2020. Whilst we have existing Intra Group Agreements for other entities, they have not been reviewed for some time and do not cover all the entities within the group. This poses a risk by relying on outdated governance documentation or the relevant documentation not existing.

Discussion points/questions:

- A Member asked how much the documents would have to change following group structure work. It was not envisaged they would need much further amendment.
- The documents had been written by Trowers and reviewed by the Governance Manager and the service level agreement confirmed with the relevant Head of Service.

Ongo Partnership Agreed: The Board

- Reviewed the drafts and approved the Intra Group Agreements with Ongo Partnership for:
 - Ongo Commercial Ltd, Ongo Roofing Ltd and Ongo Heating & Plumbing Ltd.
 - Ongo Communities Ltd, Ongo Recruitment and Crosby Brokerage Ltd.
- Agreed to the documents being signed in the Director capacity by Bob Walder and Jo Sugden as Company Secretary.
- Authorised the Governance Team to progress the documents through to final signature and full approval/adoption.

5. **Agenda Item 7: Customer Feedback**

Summary: The requirement for landlords to facilitate and deliver real, meaningful tenant influence has never been so prominent with references in the National Housing Federation Code of Governance, Social Housing White Paper and enhanced Housing Ombudsman powers.

The Board needs to be assured the Ongo customer voice is not only facilitated, but is heard and used to influence and shape services and service provision.

Discussion points/questions:

- Karen Cowan introduced the report and explained how all the detail was collated.
- The change in methodology has seen a reduction in satisfaction for various reasons, including the data being collected in different ways (digitally) and in real time.
- The overall customer satisfaction target has been revised to 80%.
- There are areas of dissatisfaction which officers are aware of that present as trends e.g. communication.
- Where there is dissatisfaction, technology is used to create a workflow to prompt officers to contact the complainant.
- Becky Johns has done a lot of work around complaints to improve that area of the business. The Customer Resolution Team track complaints after 10 days and the complaints lead (Becky) checks complaints are 100% resolved.
- A Member requested the terminology “preventative complaints” be reviewed as an individual is dissatisfied whether the issue has gone on to be resolved or not. Suggestion of “rapid resolution” to be considered.
- A Member suggested it would be useful to track tenant feedback and complaints against geographical location and also the protected characteristics under the Equalities Act.
- For the next report, the Board would like to see volume and % on ASB. **Action 5/22**
- The Housing Ombudsman code requires a Board champion for complaints. This was discussed and the Board agreed having a champion was not good governance as there should be a whole Board approach to this issue to ensure engagement and oversight.
- Members felt the report was good and was the kind of information they wanted to see in the future.

Ongo Partnership and Ongo Homes Agreed:

- Considered and challenged the complaint handling code self-assessment.
- Board were assured the Ongo customer voice is not only facilitated, but is heard and used to influence and shape services and service provision.
- Considered the format of the report to be suitable for future reports
- Determined the report provided the assurance needed in relation to how the customer voice is facilitated and utilised.

6. Agenda Item 8: Review Delivery of Overall Strategy & Financial Plan

6.1 Agenda Item 8.1: Business Plan 2022/23

Summary: The Board have previously considered the business plan for 2022/23 and the following 30-year period, including detailed sensitivity analysis, stress testing and the application of mitigating actions, at meetings in January and March 2022. Following the conclusion of the financial year the Business plan is updated for actual opening balances – this paper is provided to confirm that final position.

Discussion points/questions:

- The Board appreciated the simplified final position provided to the Board which showed no material difference following the financial year end.

Ongo Partnership and Ongo Homes Agreed: Board approved the final business plan based on final year end position for 2021/22, and the lack of any material change from previous detailed discussions and reporting.

6.2 Agenda Item 8.2: Management Accounts & Performance

Summary: This report presents the abridged management accounts of Ongo Homes, and full management accounts of Ongo Partnership (the entity) and the Ongo Group. The report and management accounts provide information on the financial performance of the group for the year ended March 2022.

Discussion points/questions:

- The Board accepted the management accounts that were presented to them.

Ongo Partnership and Ongo Homes Agreed: The Board

- Noted the contents of this report and associated information and approved the management accounts of Ongo Partnership and Ongo Homes for the period.
- Noted the red status of three, and amber status of one business plan stress test indicators and continues to consider the impact of rising inflation on future costs for Ongo Homes.

6.3 Agenda Item 8.3: Financial Performance Against 2021/22 Business Plan

Summary: The business plan for 2021/22 was approved at the May 2021 Group Common Board meeting, and formed the basis for our internal and external financial reporting for 2021/22. This report identifies our performance against that business plan. This report identifies the performance of the business during 2021-22 against key components of the approved business plan, measured against the financial results contained within the March 2022 Management accounts (subject to audit).

Discussion points/questions:

- Ashley Harrison highlighted the financial performance against the business plan following year end. This was an additional report to wrap up the year end against what was put into the Business Plan so Board were clear on performance.
- Members were happy with the report and thanked officers for the clarity it provided.

Ongo Partnership and Ongo Homes Agreed: Board noted the reported performance against the approved business plan for 2021/22.

7. Agenda Item 9: Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Summary: Ongo has a duty of care to all stakeholders, including our employees, customers, and contractors. We have a legal obligation to comply with various Health and Safety legislation and regulation, with serious consequences if we fail to do so. Board members must play a key role in setting the tone from the top, the risk appetite and providing oversight for Health and Safety. Board members must satisfy themselves that Ongo is effectively managing the risk.

Discussion points/questions:

- Since the report was written, one no injury incident had happened involving a gas line which Cadent had attended and made safe. The Health and Safety Team are undertaking a full investigation.

- A Member queried the data in the report relating to mental health which suggests it dates back to October 2021. This will be queried with the report author. **Action 6/22**
- The outstanding fire risk assessment action at Trent View House is not the same issue as had been reported several times previously. This is a new action; the work has been completed but the evidence to provide this has not been provided. Ongo have progressed to legal action against the third party swiftly.
- A request was made to include progress against the programme of installing carbon monoxide monitors in properties. **Action 7/22**

Ongo Partnership & Ongo Homes Agreed: Board confirmed they are satisfied with the management of Health, Safety and Environment arrangements set out in the report.

8. **Agenda Item 10: Strategic Risk Register**

Summary: Risk is the possibility of an event and the consequences it has on the achievement of objectives, both at a strategic and operational level. Robust Risk Management is an essential element of effective governance and a strong internal control environment.

Discussion points/questions:

- There are three flagged risks and one new risk. A recent assurance review of Risk Mitigating Controls by our internal auditors provided substantial assurance.
- A Member queried whether financial decline is the appropriate word to use in the risk title and suggested financial challenge may be a better term. **Action 8/22**

Ongo Partnership and Ongo Homes Agreed: Board considered, debated and agreed the changes in risk score and wider risk register and confirmed they are satisfied with the Risk Assurance Programme 2022-23. They did not identify any further areas for review by the Group Audit and Risk Committee.

9. **Agenda Item 11: Governance**

9.1 **Agenda Item 11.1 Governance Update**

Summary: This report aims to provide an update on any recent regulatory judgements and gradings to ensure Board are fully aware of any recent changes in the sector, including any other updates from the Regulator. It also covers any other areas of governance which requires board approval or discussion.

Discussion points/questions:

- Ongo Homes has received notification by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) of its in-depth assessment.
- The Board were advised of the upcoming reaccreditation for Leaders in Diversity. As part of this, they will receive a request to complete a questionnaire and were asked to complete it to assist the accreditation work.

Ongo Partnership and Ongo Homes Agreed: Board noted the updates from around the sector and the notification from the RSH to Ongo Homes of its in-depth assessment.

9.2 **Agenda Item 11.2: In Depth Review of Tenancy Standard**

Summary: The Tenancy standard covers two main areas of the business, being the allocations and mutual exchanges (how we let our homes and offer exchanges) and tenure (the tenancies

we offer and why). Ongo Homes remains compliant with this standard. There are some actions that Ongo would like to deliver to go above and beyond this standard as part of being a great landlord and offering quality homes.

Discussion points/questions:

- Kevin Hornsby introduced the review and explained the standard is complied with. To enhance compliance there are three areas identified where it is planned to make improvements.
- One area is to introduce property inspections that will help us identify missing customer information or identify where changes have been made in customer information, as well as get a review of the condition of properties.

Ongo Homes Agreed: The Board

- Considered the self-assessment against the Tenancy standard and agreed that Ongo Homes remains compliant.
- Discussed and agreed the additional actions suggested by way of further improving the Ongo offer in this area.

10. Agenda Item 12: Other Board & Committee Updates:

10.1 Agenda Items 12.1: Minutes and 12.2: Assurance Update from Board and Committee Chairs
Minutes from all other Board and Committee meetings are available for Members to view within the Document Library in Convene. The updates provided by the subsidiary Chairs were shared in the meeting pack and all noted.

11. Agenda Item 13: Ratify Items Approved by Convene

Two items had been dealt with via Convene. One was to approve some amendments to the Board Recruitment and Succession Strategic Plan & Policy. This was approved by all members with a request the wording in section 4.1.2 be slightly reworded to make the meaning clearer. This was agreed and a final copy of the updated approved policy will be circulated to GCB for their information. The second item related to a decision required around a pension following a death. Both decisions were confirmed as agreed.

12. Agenda item 14: Attendance List

The attendance list was noted.

13. Agenda item 15: Time for Reflection

A Member felt this was a good set of meeting papers. The Chair requested for the next meeting that Members attend in person for a face to face meeting.

With no further business, the meeting closed at 4.22pm.

Signed by Chair: Date:

As a true and correct record of the Group Common Board meeting held on 18 May 2022.